

Climate plans in Alaska

Highlights

Types of plans

- Climate Action Plans
- Climate Adaptation Plans
- Hazard Mitigation Plans
- Impact Assessments

Federal policy

- 42 USC 3121: *Denali Commission Act of 1998*
- 33 USC 2269: *Section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000*
- 42 USC 5121-5208: *Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000*
- EO 13689: *Enhancing Coordination of National Efforts in the Arctic (2015)*

State policy

- HCR 56 (1990): *Relating to global climate change*
- SB 278 (2006): *Alaska Climate Change Task Force*
- HCR 30 (2006): *Climate Impact Assessment Commission*
- AO 238 (2007): *Alaska Climate Change Sub-Cabinet*
- AO 298 (2017): *Alaska Climate Change Strategy*

Tribal governments, cities, municipalities, boroughs, and the State of Alaska have developed plans to respond to climate change. Nested jurisdictions (e.g., city) often fall within the scope of multiple plans. For the purpose of this brief, we are considering preparedness (Climate Action Plans, Climate Adaptation Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans) and response (Impact Assessments) plans. The text will focus on Federal and State policy critical to most climate plans in Alaska.

Federal Policy

After the United States General Accounting Office (2003) reported that 184 out of 213 Native Villages were affected by flooding or erosion, most plans have been coordinated or funded by the Federal or State government. The GAO report was based on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) studies of coastal erosion under the *Tribal Partnership Program* (33 USC 2269). Subsequent Baseline Erosion Assessments (2010), a type of Impact Assessment, have been funded by Congress. To prepare for erosion, affected communities can use their Baseline Erosion Assessments to apply for planning assistance. For emergency funding under the *Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000* (42 USC 5165), the Federal Emergency Management Agency

requires that the jurisdiction have a Hazard Mitigation Plan.ⁱ The *Denali Commission* (42 USC 3121) addresses other crucial needs of rural Alaska, including sea level rise. Native Villages can access planning funds from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Tribal Resilience Program, and other agencies.ⁱⁱ

State Policy

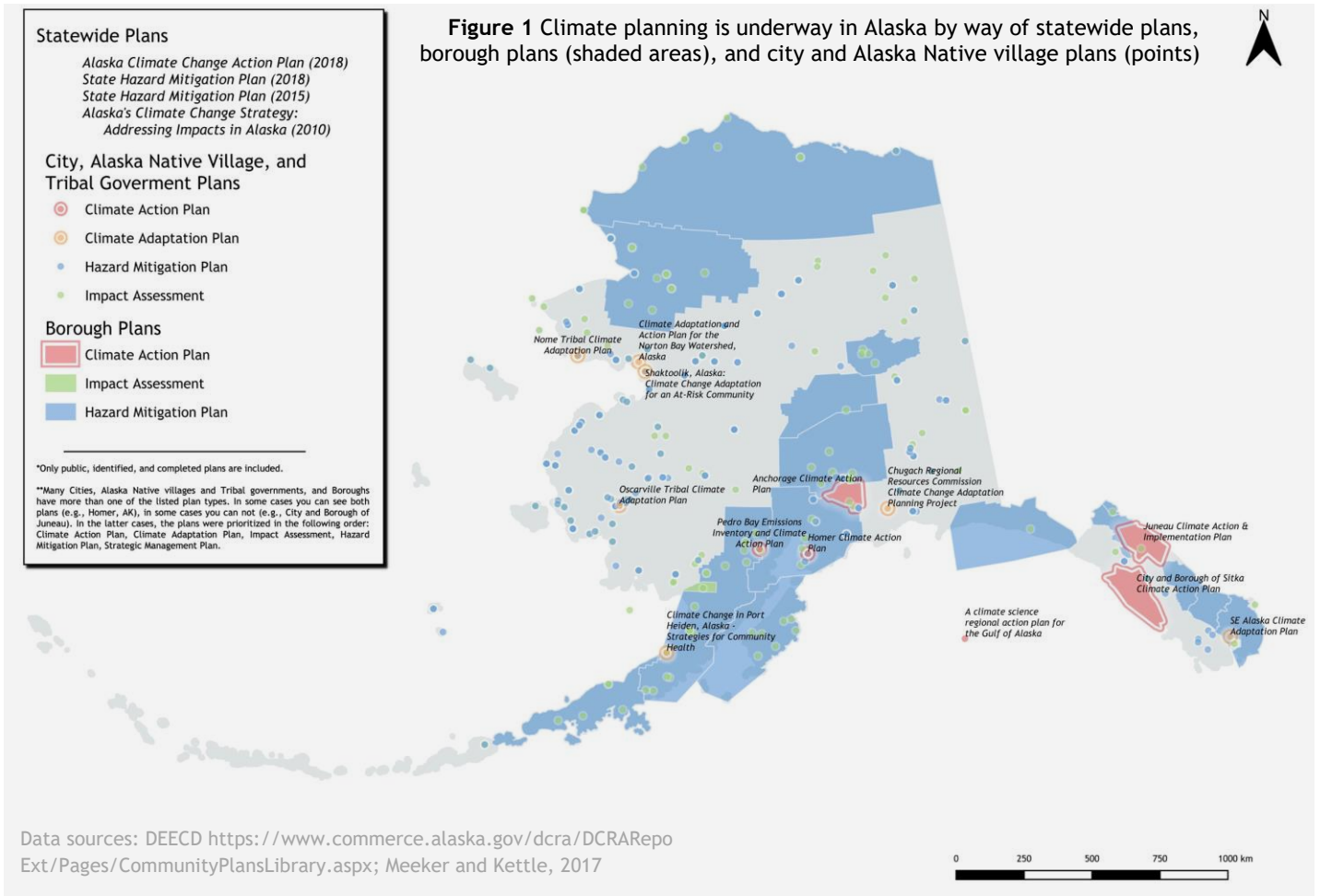
The Alaska State Legislature has adopted two pieces of legislation to mitigate climate change: HCR 56 (1990) and HCR 30 (2006). HCR 30 established a temporary Alaska Climate Impact Assessment Commission to assess "current and potential effects of climate warming trends on citizens, natural resources, public health, and economy."ⁱⁱⁱ Former Governor Sarah Palin signed AO 238, establishing a permanent Alaska Climate Change Sub-Cabinet. Utilizing the *Final Commission Report* (2008), the Sub-Cabinet prepared an *Alaska Climate Change Strategy* and requested that seven State agencies^{iv} "identify how a changing climate may affect its ability to meet its mission." State agencies created public documents such as the Alaska Department of Fish & Game *Climate Change Strategy* (2010) and the Alaska Department of Environment Conservation

(DEC) *Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventory for 1990-2010* (2015). In 2008, the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development established the Alaska Climate Change Impact Mitigation Program (3 AAC 195) and the Coastal Impact Assistance Program (3 AAC 196). Both programs provide technical assistance and funding to communities preparing Impact Assessments. Former Governor Sean Parnell disbanded the cabinet in 2011. Former Governor Walker signed AO 298 in 2017, establishing the Climate Action Leadership Team (CALT). In 2018, CALT recommended the Alaska Climate Change

Action Plan. In 2018, the DEC prepared its first greenhouse gas emission inventory and climate change adaptation plan for Pedro Bay, Alaska. In February 2019, Governor Dunleavy dissolved CALT.

Local Plans

Climate Action Plans and Climate Adaptation Plans, critical to local planning, are often completed separate from the Federal and State policies listed above. The first such plan was the Homer Climate Action Plan, completed in 2007 (see Figure 1 for all plans; local plans are in red).



ⁱ According to State Mitigation Plan Review Guide (FP 302-094-), State plans are required to consider risks related to climate change, while local plans are not. <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/101659>

ⁱⁱ Additional Federal Programs are outlined in the Climate Resilience in Alaskan Communities (2015): https://www.denali.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Catalog_of_Federal_Resilience_Programs_for_Alaskan_Communities.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.akleg.gov/basis/Bill/Detail/24?Root=HCR%2030>

^{iv} Those state departments considered most likely impacted by climate change are the Alaska Departments of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Environmental Conservation, Fish and Game, Health and Social Services, Military and Veterans' Affairs, Natural Resources, and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.